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New York Theatre Diary

Arabian Nights- Jones Beach Stadium 6/24/54 Musical extravaganza presented by Guy Lombardo. With Lauritz Melchior,Helena Scott,etc.Plays nightly through Sept in 8200 seat outdoor stadium 25 miles from NYC...Major Barbara- Greenwich Mews 6/28/54. Paul Vincent Gordon directs Shaw revival with cast headed by Karen Morley, Edwin Gordon, Opening postponed from 6/23/54.

Strawhat Season Opens

The Lady Chooses, William McCleery's comedy presented at Westport,Conn,Playhouse, is an extension of an original TV script that wins moderate success, rates Doul,Variety. Thanks to Faye Emerson's radiant performance the Langers have a nice little hit as their 23rd season opener,mugg notes. Cast shows lack of rehearsal time, though all including Walter Abel, Hugh Reilly and Jeffry Harris, turn in good performances...Nathan the Wise read by Clarence Derwent and company at White Barn Theatre,Westport,Conn shows that the Lessing play rates important attention as a present day theatre document. Mechior Lengyel adapted the dramatic poem. Doul,Variety, rates role as one to be remembered in Derwent's career.

Hits Revisited

Barry Sullivan in the Barney Greenwald role of The Caine Mutiny Court Martial originally portrayed by Henry Fonda won the approval of Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Hobe, Variety. Former felt Sullivan is better than Fonda who had been cast against type. While latter thought new actor lacks Fonda's authority, style and magnetism. Variety drama editor noted a few minor script changes. Both agreed final scene was still one of the most exciting in town.

Two new leads in Tea and Sympathy , Anthony Perkins and Joan Fontaine won split notices from Kerr, Herald Tribune and Francis, Billboard. Both thought Perkins gave a sensitive, and different, performance. Both also had minor complaints about Miss Fontaine's NY stage debut. Kerr doubts if Hollywood star has given herself over to the kind but clear headed schoolmaster's wife. At present she is giving a carefully externalized performance from which a necessary alertness and a stiff and sturdy spine are missing. Francis,Billboard, is sure her performance will improve with playing. At present her final scene couldn't be bettered,he praised, by anyone.

Drama Desk Meeting

1954-55 officers of "Drama Desk", the NY Theatre reporters and editors organization, were elected at the final meeting of the season at Sardi's. John Keating of Cue was named president, John Beaufort of Christian Science Monitor was elected vice president. Louis Calta of NY Times and Ted Kraus of Critical Digest were re-elected treasurer and secretary. Gunther Lawrence,press agent, Tom Dash,Women's Wear, and Rita Hassen, Show Business,were named to committee to consider group's sponsorship of an annual "Off Broadway Vernon Rice Award." Group voted down suggestion of the organization's fighting for an expanded first night ticket list as out of their province.

Off Broadway

Financial summary of Phoenix Theatre first season at 12th St and 2nd Ave shows a loss of $50,000, reveals Variety. The Sea Gull revival was the only production to earn a net profit. While The Golden Apple just barely repaid its production costs.

Ensemble plans to present as its first two plays in repertory next season at the Bijou, Saroyan's My Heart's in the Highlands and O'Neill's A Moon for the Misgotten. 30 top players have been named to participate in the series.

ANTA is honoring Phoenix Theatre producers T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton July 1 at luncheon at Park Sheraton for their theatrical contribution to the past season...Hunter and Huburn continue to present Philip Matthews in A.A. Milne's The Great Broxopp every Friday and Saturday at Jan Hus House... Downtown National Theatre at Second Ave and East Houston will present plays in English starting Oct 27 with a dramatization of A Stone for Danny Fisher produced by Henrietta Jacobson and Julius Adler.

Of Mice and Men revival presented by an all Negro company by Comet Productions at Open Door, won 3 pro reviews. Herridge,Post,found production well worth a trip below Washington Square inspite of the discomforts of table seating. LDK, Women's Wear, rated Steinbeck script still filled with stunning violence and truthful compassion. It is given a tremendously moving performance. Except for some minor complaints on casting Stewart, Show Business, joined his colleagues in recommending the production staged and presented by Luther James.

Vaudeville

Archie Robbins and Reba Moness head new Palace vaudeville show playing with "Tanganyika" film. Other acts on bill include Eddie Erickson, Stump and Stumpy, Atomics, Kaye and Aldrich and Varju Bros.

Other Broadways

Chio River's sole remaining showboat starts its 5th season under sponsorship of Hiram College Players presenting Uncle Tom's Cabin, Lust Luere and Liquor and Maria Martens..."Group 20" will revisit Puerto Rico this summer under the sponsorship of that government.

A "sponsored" vaudeville show is being tried out in a London suburban theatre. Manufacturers buy ten minute segments of the program for which they get a mention of their product at the start and end of each act.

Passion Play presented in front of Notre Dame cathedral,Paris, will be presented June 26-July 7. "The True Mystery of the Passion" by Pierre Aldebert has 1200 cast and staff and plays to a stadium seating 10,000 nightly.

Theatre TV Comment

"Shakespeare on TV" lecture series with Prof. Frank C. Baxter of UCLA, won 3 rave notices from NYC critics. Program gives cause of educational TV a tremendous lift, comments Gould,Times. But he hopes CBS TV will put kinescopes on at a more convenient time than 2 45 PM Sat. Gross,News, agreed program had tremendous entertainment value. Trau,Variety,rates the teacher as an intellectual who mates an high high Q with showmanship.

Theatre Record Comments

The Golden Apple original cast album by Victor won two mild trade reviews in Billboard and Variety. Reviewers thought disc would only appeal to those who were real fans of the new musical...Same kind of mild pro votes recorded by the trade papers for the original cast album of By The Beautiful Sea recorded by Capitol.

Pajama Game original cast album by Columbia is a bright and fresh set excellently produced, rates Gros,Variety.

Green Room Department

THEATRE WAR...The theatre cannot be pronounced dead until it looks like being abandoned by the public. If stage people,urges "Stage" editorial,regard the gravity of the situation as seriously as a war time emergency and take determined action to fight it, they will restore prosperity to the profession. British trade journal also believes TV should, far from killing the theatre, stimulate it to fresh endeavour.

COLUMN TIPS...Alfred Drake to leave Kismet in Jan, asks Winchell...Call Me Madam with Elaine Stritch may play at the NY City Center,hints Lyons.

SUMMER SEASON...Most healthy development of the 1954 straw hat season is that more new plays will be tried out than in recent seasons,points out Coleman,Mirror. This is because Broadway has not been able to release the stock rights to enough hits. Another healthy sign is the number of community theatre groups being booked instead of expensive,NY tailored packages...Poor indeed is the summer theatre which will not at least break even,predicts Newsweek.

FULL EMPLOYMENT...Reading stories about how stagehands, electricians and musicians insist that additional members of their unions be hired for plays, even when there is no work for them, Watts,Post, wonders aloud what would happen if Equity demanded "off-stage" characters be cast by union members to file these non-existent roles.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Two Times Drama Mail Bag letters urge the return of Three Penny Opera to the Theatre de Lys recently vacated by The Homeward Look...The Little Hut is a pleasantly goofy comedy which got a raw deal on Broadway, comments Chapman,News...Eva Marie Saint is the new actress showing the finest potentialities during the past season, rates Watts,Post, for her portrayal in The Trip to Bountiful.

SECOND HALFING...A young actress and artist has seen the last two acts of every show on Broadway, but not the first acts,reveals Sylvester,News. She just doesn't have the money to spend, so she walks in with the intermission crowds after the first act of a show. She contents that many plays are improved by not seeing the first act,and refuses to allow friends to fill her in on the opening stanzas.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Theatre now to Fredric March is hard work, he told Torre, World Telegram & Sun. If you get into a hit play and you have to stay with it for a year, it is not fun. The actor would even rather do a radio show for buttons instead of a TV show, which is hard work and pays a lot of loot.

Pros & Cons by TMK

New York may not have built any new theatres in the Broadway area for many years, but the modern wrecking methods used to transform theatres into parking lots can tear down a playhouse in from two to four days. NYC is in a constant state of building, with or without Webb and Knapp. The continued talk of new theatre-office-apartment combinations remain only talk. The chances of such buildings actually going up are very slim. Parking garages are more profitable today than any other type of building. The solution to the theatre's problem may well be a combination parking garage-theatre building.

NYC new 5% amusement admission tax goes into effect July 1 and is expected to yield $17 million in 1954-55. The levy, opposed by trade and civic groups, applies to admissions to places of amusement and the use of facilities in such places. It also applies to membership and initiation fees of sport and social clubs. Boxing and wrestling events are exempt because they now pay taxes to the state. $3½ million of the revenue is expected from motion picture admissions. Legitimate theatre prices which were recently lowered with the cut in the federal admission tax, will be raised 5% on July 1.

Plays

The Saint of Bleeker Street by Gian-Carlo Menotti will be presented in a Broadway theatre next season under the joint sponsorship of the NYC Center of Music and Drama and Chandler Cowles...Plain and Fancy musical dealing with Amish of Pennsylvania Dutch area due in September has signed Helen Tamiris to stage the dances, and Albert Hague to provide the music for the Kollmar-Gardiner production.

People

Menasha Skulnik, The Fifth Season star, will appear as Noah in Clifford Odets' The Flowering Peach next season...Dr. Eric Bentley, New Republic, named Brander Matthews Professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia University...Barbara Bel Geddes will star in Gilbert Miller's production of Graham Greene's The Living Room..Sybil Thorndike celebrated 50 years on stage by appearing in her current role at London's Haymarket Theatre in N.C. Hunter's A Day by the Sea.

Award Department

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne received a joint honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Dartmouth College...Billboard's 11th Annual Donaldson Awards named Teahouse of August Moon the best play of season and Tea and Sympathy the best play by a new writer.

Summer Playhouses

Lily Associates, 145 E 54, PL 5-3079 offer "package" trips to Arabian Nights for groups of 35 or more. $6.60 package includes $3 dinner at Brass Rail, a round trip bus ticket and a ticket to the Jones Beach show...Bingler Tours, 201 W 41, runs busses to St. John Terrell's Music Circus at Lambertville, NJ on Fridays... Dear Charles, the Alan Melville play which Tallulah Bankhead will tour this summer has had its title changed to The Bargain. Werner Klemperer appears opposite Miss Bankhead

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CRITICAL DIGEST
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